

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

**DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT
REGARDING
H.R. 4057 - SAMARITAN INITIATIVE ACT OF 2004**

**BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITY
COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

July 13, 2004

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee:

The Department of Housing and Urban Development is pleased to have the opportunity to make a statement for the record of our support of H.R. 4057, the Samaritan Initiative of 2004. This bill incorporates a proposal submitted to the Congress in the President's FY 2005 budget, which calls for \$70 million in funds-\$50 million from HUD for housing, \$10 million for HHS for primary and behavioral health care, and \$10 million for VA for case management and outreach. These funds would support community collaborative projects combining housing and support services to assist in helping chronically homeless persons to become self-sufficient.

The Samaritan Initiative is designed to help meet the Administration's goal of ending chronic homelessness over ten years. This is the first Administration to target funds to assist this most vulnerable of the homeless population – a group of people who the most difficult to help achieve stability. Our work to fulfill our commitment to house the chronically homeless population --- a challenge because of its need for a significant portion of emergency shelter services --- will also

strengthen our ability to serve other homeless populations. HUD collaborated with the Departments of Health and Human Services and Veterans Affairs to accurately determine who comprises this population, and we have agreed on the definition of a chronically homeless person as "an unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more OR has had at least four (4) episodes of homelessness in the past three (3) years." Ultimately, the engagement of the chronically homeless population in permanent supportive housing will allow communities to better utilize their funds by eliminating the revolving doors of shelters, emergency rooms, jails and prisons for this vulnerable population.

HUD has long supported and continues to support all groups of homeless people, such as homeless families and veterans, youth, and victims of domestic violence. The McKinney-Vento funding allows the community to identify their local needs and target the funds to meet those needs. Of the more than \$1 billion awarded for targeted HUD homeless assistance projects in 2003, nearly half of the persons to be assisted by these funds are homeless families. Specifically, HUD's funding assisted over 200,000 families, including over 350,000 children. Housing and services programs have also been designated to serve youth, families moving from domestic violence situations and veterans, and others. Over 2,000 of the nearly 3,800 projects awarded will target homeless veterans among those they serve. Over 100 of these projects specifically target homeless veterans. A total of 930 awarded projects will serve homeless youth while more than 160 serve victims of domestic violence. Our commitment to serving all homeless groups is unwavering.

HUD's annual Continuum of Care competition emphasizes the importance of ending chronic homelessness. To be competitive for a portion of the approximately \$1 billion available in the continuum competition, all communities are required to implement local plans to end chronic homelessness. As part of the competition, HUD has committed 10 percent of the 2004 appropriation to fund projects that primarily serve the chronically homeless. Communities are also encouraged to use mainstream housing resources, such as public housing, to address the needs of homeless persons, including those who are chronically homeless. HUD's Deputy Secretary chairs a task force consisting of representatives from our mainstream housing program offices. The task force is charged with identifying ways to use housing resources for this population. A recent by-product of the task force was the use of \$6.5 million in HOME funds to develop more housing for the chronically homeless in thirteen (13) communities.

HUD has also worked with other agencies to end chronic homelessness. For instance, HUD, VA, and HHS jointly funded the 2003 Collaborative Initiative to End Chronic Homelessness. Nearly \$20 million of the \$35 million will fund HUD housing units. The other agencies will fund supportive services. A total of eleven (11) projects were awarded funding. The Chronic Collaborative is up and running. Approximately 6 months into the three years of funding, 300 of the units are leased up, and an additional 399 units soon will be coming on line. Considering the difficulty in initial engagement of the chronically homeless population, this represents an admirable initial phase.

HUD and the Department of Labor are collaborating on a joint initiative, "Ending Chronic Homelessness through Employment," funding five (5) projects to provide housing plus employment training to chronically homeless individuals to move them towards independence.

HUD provided \$10 million for housing and Labor provided \$3.5 million for employment services.

The prevention of individuals and families falling into homelessness is an important task leading to the ending of chronic homelessness. Current research highlights the necessity of improved discharge planning from institutions and transitional re-entry assistance. This is part of the prevention process. Understanding the role of emergency shelters and targeted assistance will also be included in the development of effective prevention programs.

The Administration's focus on the issue of chronic homelessness has encouraged analysis that is enhancing research into the complex issue of homelessness. A continuation of creative funding opportunities will provide the additional collaborative programming leading to better understanding that will result in long-term positive outcomes. These verified results will assist in the development of models in other jurisdictions.

The Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) will provide more specific and verifiable information regarding this previously difficult to enumerate populace. This information is already allowing communities, such as Spokane, Washington and Columbus, Ohio, to analyze their housing development and housing assistance programs. These communities are developing creative collaborations that will assist not only the chronically homeless, but affordable housing developers and first-time homebuyers. Although the replication and evaluation of programs involving this difficult-to-serve population will always be a

challenge, the research currently being developed through Federal, state, local and private funding promises to be an effective tool in our quest to end chronic homelessness.

HUD is involved in a number of other inter-agency initiatives that serve to help end chronic homelessness and serve all homeless populations:

- the successful completion of policy academies by 55 states and territories. The academies resulted in accessing mainstream resources and other cooperative partnerships. The National Learning Meeting scheduled in Washington, DC in October will highlight these efforts.
- HUD and HHS funded a multi-agency technical assistance collaboration that resulted in the distribution of 10,000 CDs and a continually updated website known as FirstStep. This information provided is assisting case managers in accessing mainstream resources for their clients.

The Samaritan Initiative is a natural extension of all these initiatives. HUD will serve as the administrator of this program to assist in the integration of the initiative with other existing programs. The Samaritan Initiative will expand the demonstration of the joint commitment of Federal agencies to move beyond traditional agency functioning. This commitment is an essential component of the nation-wide, multi-level organizational change that is seeking to end chronic homelessness

The program development generated by these joint initiatives far exceeds the direct dollar expenditure for housing and services. A community does not have to receive direct funding in

order to feel the impact. Changed attitudes, mindsets, ways of doing business, measures of success, and new partnerships are just a few of the additional outcomes that those funds have provided to communities, states and individuals all across the United States and perhaps the world. The Samaritan Initiative reminds us of the importance of the attitude of all citizens regarding the lives of all our neighbors.

Thank you again for this opportunity to support ending chronic homelessness through creative programs such as H.R. 4057.